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Acton Historic District Commission
Meeting March 13, 2012
Minutes

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting was opened at 7:30 by Vice Chair, Pam Lynn (PL).

Also present were Ron Rose (RR), Michaela Moran (MM), Anita Rogers (AR), David Barrat (DB) and Mike Gowing, BoS liaison.

There were no citizens' concerns.

The minutes of February 21, 2012 were amended to correct the spelling of Karle Packard's first name (Karle not Carl). The minutes were approved as amended unanimously. The minutes of the March 6, 2012 meeting were approved unanimously.

7:45 South Acton Congregational Church sign. The new sign is as yet not lighted. When a choice of lighting is made, it will be presented to Anita Rogers for guidance preparatory amending the application for the new sign. It will not be on the next meeting's agenda.

8:00 Twin Seafood appointment is cancelled for tonight. The application will be amended to include an awning. MM moves to deny Twin Seafood's application unless the owners give consent to an extension before March 23, 2012 in writing. RR seconded. Voted to approve the motion unanimously.

Review of notes from Mathias Rosenfeld's (MR) notes concerning disposition of the white barn, brown house and blue house on Mass. Ave. Tonight to be an introduction to the discussion.

MM Moves that the 9:15 appointment, WAVE, be taken out of order. Duly seconded and voted unanimously. Never suggested that the white barn, brown house and blue house be recreated. Adaptive reuse would be okay. WAVE is now proposing recreation of the buildings. KAB spoke with Town Counsel who said that it could be done under the certificate but needs an amendment to the certificate if the buildings were going to be demolished. New construction would need a new application. MM Does it follow the intent of the application? There are three avenues of pursuit. We can deny the amendment. Revise building or bring new application for a different project. MG Projects submitted early. Forced to accept conceptual use plan. Subsequent building would be subject to the Stretch code. Is it possible to change code requirements for these buildings after the fact. Stretch code impacts insulation, etc. New construction would be under the stretch code. Yellow house was subject to the stretch code. Voted on in 2009 WAVE to be more green. MM if the three buildings are removed there is nothing to enforce reconstruction or replacement once they are gone. Blue house could go where the white barn is. The buildings could be permitted but then not built.

8:15 App. 1208: 53 Windsor Ave. (Dryer Vent) to be installed on the second floor. Applicant did not appear for the appointment.

8:30 554 Mass. Ave. Application #1204(?) Application for window replacement. MM Liaison. The building is next to Moodz Salon. Two windows to be replaced are on the east-facing wall, two are on the west wall. They do not match the style of the house. The current windows are replacements. The building is an 1840 Greek revival with knife-edge mullion. The windows are 6 over 6 Colonial. Same size window but the proportion is different. The current windows are perfectly good windows. They are single glazed windows with storms. RR would like to get rid of the triple track. Could put in half-screen. MM The owner's goal is to eventually replace all windows. What we are supposed to do; one application for everything? MM Rear facing windows are not in our jurisdiction. Have always denied replacing windows that are functioning. Need to ask what kind of screens and if the goal is energy efficiency. Use of low E coating. Reschedule for another meeting. We have until May to act.

9:00 PM 486 Main Street: PL A portion of the stone wall was altered to provide for handicap access at the rear of the building. The path that leads from Woodbury Lane along the stone wall to the rear of the house is five feet wide. No one submitted an application to HDC for the alteration. The building is listed in the National Historic Register as well as being in the Acton Center Historic District. Letter to be sent to Dean Charter about this.

9:15 WAVE Project Update: Appearing for WAVE are Mathias Rosenfeld and Javier Ramirez. Reference is made to the 3' by 5' drawings showing progressive phases of the WAVE project on Mass. Ave. PL MM is the only one at this meeting who was involved in the original discussions. HDC has had only one day to read the reports from WAVE'S engineers who were engaged to evaluate the conditions of the three remaining buildings, the white barn, the brown house and the blue house. MR went over the history of WAVE as it relates to the three structures. The buildings were bought up by OMR back when the church was restored. The intent was to create a pedestrian environment. There was no original intent to purchase the barn, the brown house or the blue house. Yellow house and blue house were bought in 2006. They were in poor condition as of 2002. Town meeting voted to rezone the area from residential to mixed use. The project needed a connection from the parking lot for a turn around. Need to move the blue house to allow for this connection. The brown house and white barn have failing foundations. MR is trying to incorporate the remaining structures to work as a unit. The condition of the three remaining building needs to be addressed.

MR referring to structural reports. The engineering findings are a curve ball. Want to keep going. PL soliciting comments from the board. Highlighted notes show where the changes are made. Start of detail in Phase II. MM information glossed over reuse of buildings. Issue is reuse vs. re-erect. MM Adaptive reuse of buildings is what the certificate is based on. Time is not yet appropriate for an amendment of the CoA. MR We need to discuss the difficulty raised by the present condition of the three buildings. MM The core issues vs. details whether HDC feels that we need whole new construction or do we try to preserve the all or part of the buildings. MR The experience gained from preserving the yellow house showed that there was significant expense. Engineers were skeptical. That experience made us more cautious with respect to beginning Phase II. It appeared to be a lot more risky for everybody. MM Job is to preserve historic resources. Not supposed to think about use. Plan is not what was approved. Now not economically feasible. With respect to the barn, engineers recommend not to draw up a plan to step on site. What can be done? Safely on site. Brown house has a structure that can be used.

What will happen? Why recreate it? We don't want a Disneyland. Will we have to compromise from what we want? What will Phase II be? We won't do anything that will jeopardize the project. Is this a rethink of the concept? We want more thoughts on the matter. Is replication possible. Most of the structure of the buildings needs to be replaced. We can replicate what is there and it can look like what was approved.

PL It was a jolt to get this report. Is most of it accurate? It is just one view.

RR I understand the frustration with having to work with the remaining buildings. Why try to restore? Brown house little of brown house has been maintained. The interior is toast. The blue house projects like the blue house I have experience in this area where such a house was turned into a student center. The loading was high but was done by using sister members. The blue house is not a mess. Replacment vs. removing would be a wash. Reuse equals demolition and rebuilding which allows some latitude, some subtlety. Agrees with MM. AR If you allow demolition there is nothing to ensure replacement. It could have been avoided. Do a mirror image by putting the blue house at the other end; reverse the order of the buildings. Move the brown house a greater distance away. The brown house had floor suitable for various uses. RR The barn a special case. I wouldn't save it. Barn is central figure and the most forward to the street of the three. We need a sense of trying to preserve original to reuse the elements, such as the good timbers. To what point will it be restored? Something close to the original? MG The point is can the facade be preserved? MR The point is that it is such poor shape. In kind replacement; replicating in-kind. The end result is the same. How different would it be? RR By preserving the original you have a sense of authenticity by reusing what is there. What about the issue of lead paint? MM Preserve what is there at the time the West Acton Historic District was created, like the true divided light windows. AR Agrees with what RR said. Hesitant to lose what is there. RR We need to come up with a plan to have a sense of authenticity. AR If some pieces get carried forward it preserves the scale. What to do? MM Not much to be doing until we have had time to digest the report before the next meeting. Likes that the blue house could be moved to a different location. We will return to this on April 12, 2012.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:24PM.

Respectfully submitted


David T. Barrat
Secretary